

The Problem of the Laws of Appearance: Representationalism vs Naïve Realism

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More plea for help than defense of some thesis

1. A problem for representationalists
2. Naïve Realists Better Placed? A new argument for naïve realism?
3. Concluding Thought: A Return to an Actualist Theory of Experience?

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The problem of the laws of appearance for representationalists

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First: What is representationalism?



- Having tomato-experience = “experientially representing” that something is red and round
- Rejects **Actualism** about experience: it can experientially appear $Fx \rightarrow$ exists no F . *Relevant to the problem.*
- Everyone rejects Actualism – at least in hallucination! Leads to sense data and sense data bad, bad, bad!!

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What's Problem? *First* “laws”, then the problem. *Constraint on appearance.*



- **Exclusion Law.** In reality, in appearance. You cannot e-represent a single object as being ROUND-AND-SQUARE. *Phenomenology? Meinongian believe, but you cannot exp. rep.*
- **Color → Extension Law.** Reality Red → extended. Appearance. Necessarily, if you e-represent SOMETHING IS RED you must e-represent IT AS EXTENDED. *SOMEHOW* (even peripheral vision, quick view). Cannot have experience whose **only** content: X is red. **Berkeley, Cutter**
- **Property-Limits Law.** You experientially represent AT LEAST colors, shapes. Siegel: what other? But not BEING A REPUBLICAN. Cannot have **Only** content! (*Problem: is there a bright line here?*)

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- **Perspectival law:** An individual cannot experientially represent merely that there is a cube somewhere in reality, without any “perspectival content” about its location and apparent shape from “here”.
- **No logical structure:** You cannot have an experience whose **only** content is: **either** a red thing is to your left **or** a square thing is to your right. *Perhaps others.*

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The basic problem of LOAs for representationalists

- 1. Necessitism. Some** metaphysically necessary. **3**
Exclusion Law, Color → Extension Law, Property-Limits
- 2. Explanation Required.** We need an explanation: why *metaphysically necessary*.
- 3. Representationalists Can't Explain.** If you look at candidate representationalist explanations, you find they just don't work.

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The *Prima Facie* Case for Necessitism. *Analogy* -

- Metaphysically necessary nothing **in reality** is ROUND AND SQUARE??????
- How know? Not just: cannot imagine. Intrinsically plausible!!
- On face of it, LOA has **same modal status:** Metaphysically necessary nothing **in appearance** is ROUND AND SQUARE.

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2. The *Prima Facie* Case for “Explanation Required”

High Standard: Explanation = (Logical) Derivation.

1. **Actualism:** Necessarily, if it appears to an individual that something is F, must exist something (e. g. SD) F.
2. **Exclusion-in-Reality:** Necessarily, nothing in reality – not even sense datum - is ROUND AND SQUARE.
3. Therefore, **Exclusion-in-Appearance:** necessarily, it never appears to an individual that something is ROUND AND SQUARE.

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What We Want From an Explanation (I)

Simplifying. It'd be great if **great variety** of metaphysically necessary LOAs could somehow be logically derived from **just a few more basic truths.**

When we write down our final theory, just have to include those few more basic truths.

For example: single axiom of ICONICITY: necessarily, experience is realized by an iconic format???

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What we want from an explanation (2)

LOA: “Necessarily, it cannot **appear** that something is ROUND AND SQUARE”

Somehow derivable from

“Necessarily, nothing **really be** be ROUND&SQUARE.

Hard for me to believe: two, independent modal truths here!!!

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3. The *Prima Facie* Case for Representationalists Cannot Explain



FIRST warm-up point: Rejects Actualism. Appearance not constrained by reality. So constraints on appearance cannot be directly derived from constraints on reality. Why any at all?

SECOND: *other* forms of representation – belief and language – all kinds of crazy stuff: **incompatible properties; color without anything spatial; arbitrarily abstract properties REPUBLICANISM; non-perspectival contents; logically complex content.** *Why experiential rep NECESSARILY different?*

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An **argument from elimination** that representationalists cannot explain

- These warm-up points don't show that they **CANNOT** provide a simplifying explanation.
- But if we look at candidate representationalist explanations, we find that they fail.

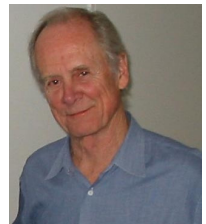
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Preliminary: many (Tye, Dretske) accept **two-part reductive externalist** representationalism. "Real definition" --



NECESSARILY, A to experientially represents that p
IFF

A (i) undergoes a SUBPERSONAL internal "vehicle" N (neural in our case) that realizes an experience and (ii) N to bear some externally-determined R to the occurrences of p-states.



Let's assume this is right for awhile.

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Reductive externalist representationalists

(1) **Format explanation** concerning hidden the subpersonal representations.

(2) **Psychosemantic explanation** concerning how that subpersonal realizer gets its representational content.

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Let's begin with a **(I) format explanation** in terms of hidden realizers. *Tall order!!*

(A) **Metaphysically necessary** truths about the format of hidden vehicles – apply not just to humans but to all possible experiencers (aliens).

(B) They logically entail **ALL** the laws of appearance (for which necessitism is true) *What might they be?*

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One idea: while vehicles for belief sentence-like, the hidden vehicles are **necessarily** “picture-like” or “iconic” not literally but:

- **Parts principle:** every part of the subpersonal representation represents a “part of” the scene represented.
- **Holism:** every part represents multiple contents.

Not clear that this is *actually* true for all vehicles of experience!!!!!! (Green and Quilty-Dunn).

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A simple problem with iconicity explanation of metaphysical necessity of LOAs

Remember: Explanation requires **Derivation.**

Parts-Principle and Holism are abstract.
Neither logically entails **ANY** of the LOA!

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Some general problems with ANY format explanation of necessity of LOAs

First, hard to see how explain **Exclusion**. To explain productivity&systematicity, **any** theory of format must be compositional. E. g. a neural rep of motion in one brain area and a neural rep of color in another “bound”, computational-functional relation.

Why couldn't some possible perceiver be wired up so that a horrible binding error could occur, in which neural representations of ROUND and SQUARE stand in “binding”?

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A second general problem with format explanations: epistemic

- Analogy: Water-2. We only know this empirically because grounded by hidden nature.
- If LOAs grounded by hidden realizer, we should only know them empirically. NOT SO! (*Is this valid argument-form?*)

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Turn to **(2) Psychosemantic Explanations**

- These explanations appeal, **not to format** of inner representations, but to a theory of **how they get their contents.**

- Neander. **Causal-Informational:** X represents F iff X has the function of **being caused by F.**

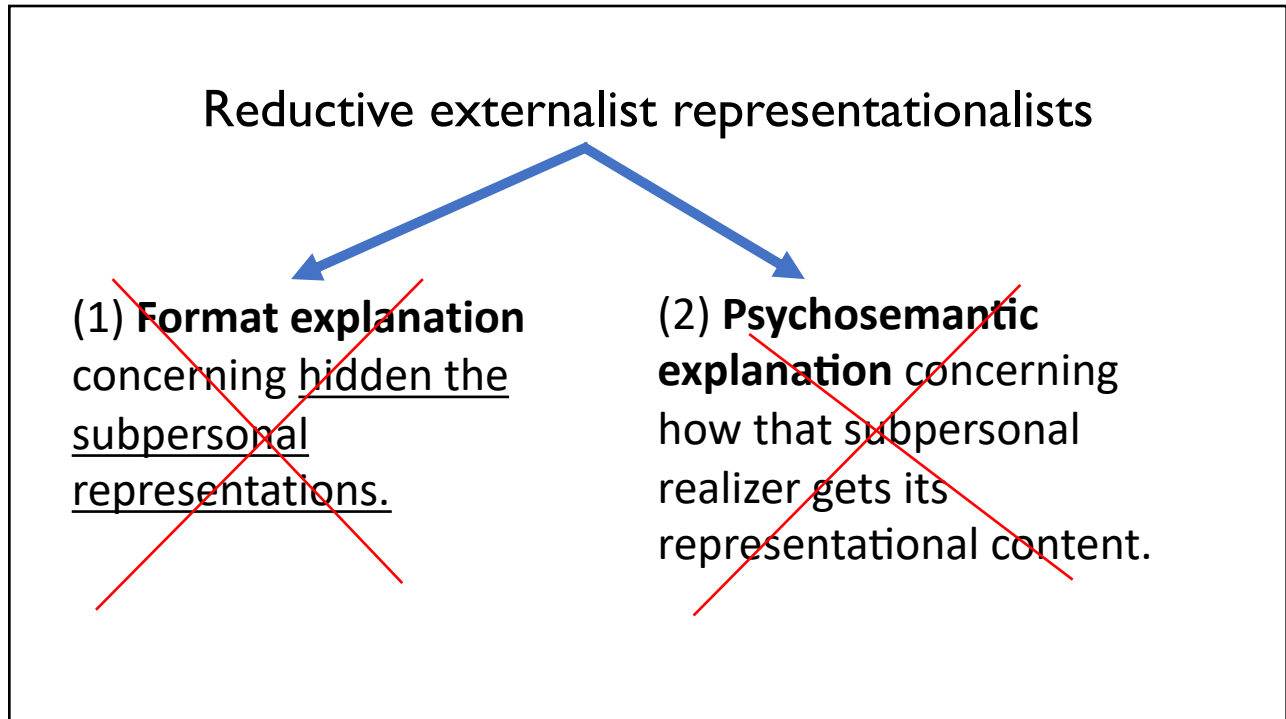


- Could *this* explain metaphysical necessity of LOAs?

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- Causal Theory **Explains** **Exclusion Law?** ROUND-AND-SQUARE cannot cause. *Problem:* ignores compositionality. Given this, causal theory doesn't rule out: R1 caused by round, R2 square, then bound.
- Causal Theory **Explains** **Property-Limits?** **Systems sensitive to** colors and shapes, not abstract. *Problem:* this is only a contingent fact. A possible sensory system function to be causally detect republican!!!!
- Causal-Informational Theory also violates Color-Extension Law. To see this, imagine **Color-Only Creature:** causally sensitive to color but no spatial properties all. (Pautz 2017, Morgan MS)

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What about *Other* Forms of Representationalism?

I accept a **non-reductive** form of representationalism.

I reject Tye and Dretske's two-part real def. of experiential representation – **“primitive”**.

*On this form, **prospects ever dimmer!!** Cannot LOA derive from our real definition of exp. representation.*

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In sum, the problem for representationalists

1. Necessitism.

2. Explanation Needed

3. Representationalists Can't Explain.

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One representationalist response: Deny Necessitism

- All LOA contingent special science laws that could be violated in other possible individuals – perhaps in actual people.
- If contingent, we know IN ADVANCE that they have neural-computational explanations (all do).
- *Chalmers, Speaks, EJ Green*. But I cannot deny LOA! No sufficiently strong reason to deny.

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A second representationalist response (I kinda like) Easy Essentialist Explanations!

Exclusion Law: In essence of E-Rep that no one E-rep ROUND & SQUARE. (More general.)

Color-Extension Law: In essence of E-rep that if you E-rep **red** you E-rep spatial stuff. (More general)

Property Limits. It is in the essence of some properties that they can (?) be experienced. It is in the essence of other properties – being a republican, having mass – that they cannot be. *Complicated and*

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Another drawback

Treat Exclusion-in-Appearance (“it cannot **appear** ROUND-SQUARE”) as a **basic** essentialist truth.

Would be much better to derive it from Exclusion-in-Reality “nothing can **really be** ROUND-SQUARE”).

Intuitively, related. This brings me to naïve realism.

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Brings me to....

Are Naïve Realists Better Placed to Explain LOAs?

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- LOAs in terms of “exp rep”. But we can also formulate them using some more neutral idiom: “appears”, “experience of”. Even naïve realists should accept!
- So explanatory question arises for naïve realists.
- You might think that they are better placed.

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After all, naïve realists hold ...

Plus or minus a bit, the character of experience in good cases is grounded in your experiential acquaintance with concrete states of the ***real world***.

So perhaps they can derive constraints on *appearance* from constraints on *reality*?

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One-by-one - Start with Exclusion Law

- True, in the good case, you cannot be acquainted with the state of something being ROUND AND SQUARE. *Can't be.*
- *In hallucination, most naïve realists, like representationalists, reject Actualism.* Just like representationalists: *in hallucination, why cannot it appear to you that something is round and square, given that this wouldn't require there actually be such a thing?*

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Martin's "epistemic" naïve realism explain Exclusion?

- (1) In any possible situation, it **IS** (impersonally) **knowable** that X is NOT experientially acquainted with the actual state of something being ROUND AND SQUARE. *A priori no such state.*
- (2) For X to have an experience as of a round square = for it to be the case that it **IS NOT** impersonally knowable by reflection that X is NOT experientially acquainted with the actual state of something being ROUND AND SQUARE.
- (3) Therefore, in any possible situation, X does not have an experience as of a round and square thing.



Neat – Derivation - Other Problems!!!

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Could Another Form of NR Explain Exclusion?

- **Primitivist NR:** To have an experience as of red and round thing is to be in a state that is **“experientially indistinguishable”** from *being acquainted with a red and round thing.*
- This is a “primitive” reflexive relation that cannot be cashed out in epistemic or other terms, but supervenes on the physical.
- Need not be any deeper mental description in bad cases.

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Cannot Explain Exclusion - Analogy

- When people hallucinate forbidden color yellowish-blue, they undergo a state that is “experientially indistinguishable” from the SUCCESS-STATE-TYPE being acquainted with yellow-blue, **even if that type is not instantiated (Billock & Tsou)**
- So why can't a possible experiencer undergo a state that stands in this relation to the SUCCESS-STATE-TYPE being acquainted with ROUND-AND-SQUARE, **even if that type is not and cannot be instantiated???**

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Next: Color → Extension Law.



Selective. You are acquainted with the color, but not charge.

Unimaginable Scenario: Acquainted with color-state, nothing else. **Why** can't that happen?

Even if RED → EXTENDED, doesn't follow that *acquaintance with RED → acquaintance with EXTENSION!!*

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In fact, a natural development of NR violates
“Color → Extension Law”

Color but not charge? Why? A **causal
theory of the basis of acquaintance!**

Color-Only Creature: has a sensory
system that is causally sensitive **ONLY** to
colors, no spatial features.

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Finally, property-limits?

- Why can you be **experientially acquainted** with color and shape states, but not states like the state of someone’s being a republican, or being the first to prove Fermat’s Last Theorem?

(Suppose that they accept a causal theory of basis of acquaintance. Then their view violates this law!!)

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Concluding Remark: A Return to Across-the-Board Actualism?

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Representationalists and Most NRs reject
across-the-board actualism, but.....

1. **Across-the-board Actualism:** Necessarily, if it appears to an individual that something is F, must really exist something F.
2. **Exclusion-in-Reality:** Necessarily, nothing – not even sense datum - is ROUND AND SQUARE.
3. Therefore, **Exclusion-in-Appearance:** necessarily, it never appears to an individual that something is ROUND AND SQUARE.

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Another reason to accept Across-the-board actualism - it is just obvious (geniuses Russell, Moore, etc)

"When I see a tomato there is much that I can doubt. One thing however I cannot doubt [even in hallucination]: that **there exists [then and there] a red patch of a round and somewhat bulgy shape**, standing out from a background of other colour-patches, and having a certain visual depth, and that this whole field of colour is directly present to my consciousness." *Pound the table.*

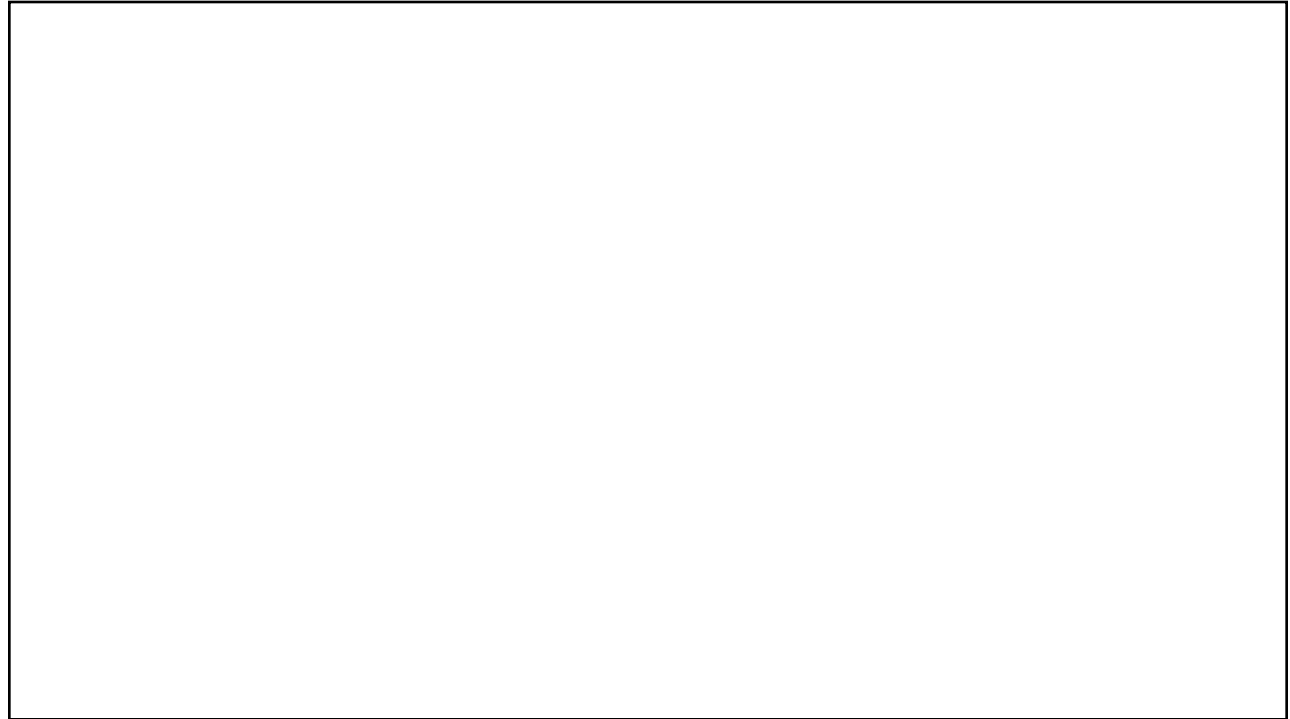


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Given two reasons, take seriously a return to across-the-board actualism

- (1) Sense datum view (Robinson)
- (2) Austinian Disjunctivism (Alex Moran)
- (3) Umrao Sethi's "sensible overdetermination" view.
- (4) Sensa representationalism (Phil Issues 2020)

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Martin 2006

- “the proposal here should not be read as claiming that to [say that the dog’s situation is not impersonally knowably different from seeing a bunch of carrots] to the dog is to say that were it self-aware it would not be able to tell its situation from one in which it perceived a bunch of carrots; or to say that were an ideally reflective agent to be in the dog’s situation then it would not be able to know it is not perceiving a bunch of carrots.”

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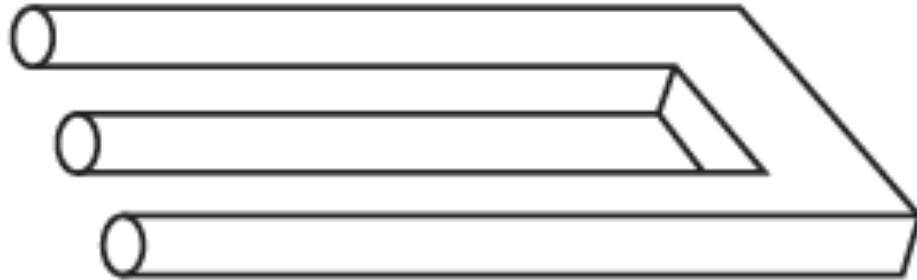


Figure 3.1 The Devil's pitchfork

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“When I focus on the prongs I experience them as straight, and when I focus on the ‘handle’ I experience the middle prong as lying behind the upper and lower prongs, but at no point do I experience all three prongs as having incompatible properties. . .

.The inconsistency present in these phenomena is not contained within a single experiential state but occurs only as one attempts to integrate a series of distinct visual experiences that are not phenomenally unified with each other.” Bayne (2010, 54)

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Berkeleyan Law

- Motion without chromatic or achromatic color? Well, not quite a counterexample.
- Form without color? Kentridge, Heywood and Cowey (2004): MS, achromat-topsia

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- MS has a damaged cortical color center from encephalitis in 1970. Cannot order 100 color patches (Farnsworth–Munsell 100-Hue Test). Can perceive distal forms by way of luminance differences. Black, white, grey???
- But: If you place a shape against isoluminant background, where the shape only differs in chromaticity, MS could detect it!!! Experienced distal form (an edge) but not because he was detecting any changes or difference in luminance.
- Fiona M: alien colors!!

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Two more points

- Is subpersonal iconic format part of **essence of Exing contents**? Suppose your mom's sensory systems all have discursive format. Is she a zombie?
- Not even clear that actual format is (fully) iconic. MT, V4 (no accurate retinopy). Binding. Fougne and Alvarez (2011) - *independent forgetting*. Green and Quilty-Dunn (forthcoming). "Multiple slots". (Another issue: Holism a bit odd psychosemantically: do atoms track property clusters? Novel?)

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- When subjects are presented with figures, they later recall color and orientation at different rates.
- This is explained if we give up Holism. The subjects have separate representations for color and orientation. The color representation can degrade without the orientation one, and vice versa.

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